

Zion National Park Historic Trail System,
Gateway to the Narrows
Zion National Park
Springdale vicinity
Washington County
Utah

HAER No. UT-40-D

HAER
UTAH,
27-SPDA.Y,
ID-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
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P.O. Box 25287
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: Zion National Park
Springdale vicinity, Washington County, Utah

Date of Construction: 1929; Alterations - 1968, 1970, 1982

Architect/Designer: Guy D. Edwards

Present Owner: National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior

Present Use: Self-guiding nature trail

Significance: Constructed with native materials and associated with "National Park Service-Rustic" architectural style, the Gateway to the Narrows Trail possesses structural integrity. Designed with vertical curves and winding alignment, the trail suggest nature's work rather than man's.

Researcher: James Jurale
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The Narrows Foot Trail was surveyed in June 1928 by Guy D. Edwards, Assistant Engineer, Field Headquarters, Zion National Park. Edwards completed the trail blueprints in January 1929 at the Office of Chief Engineer in San Francisco, California, and they were approved the following February. Trail construction began in the middle of April 1929 under the supervision of Zion National Park building foreman, Walter Ruesch. Twenty to twenty-five men were employed in building the trail, which was 70% complete by May. By July 1929, daily field trips were held on the trail. Prior to its completion, the Narrows path was only a narrow trail and "pedestrians had to wade in loose powdery sand--ankle deep, and were choked by dust."

Starting from the Temple of Sinawava at the end of the Zion Canyon Scenic Drive, the trail follows the Virgin River to the north for a distance of one mile. At this point, the canyon becomes so narrow that there is no longer room for both river and trail. One of the least strenuous and most popular trails in Zion, it is utilized as both a naturalist-guided and self-guided walk. It is entirely paved, climbs less than 100 feet from start to finish, and was improved for handicapped access in 1982.

The original pavement was an asphalt and gravel mixture, the gravel being spread and rolled, and the bitumuls (emulsified asphalt) applied by the penetration method. Grading work was handled to avoid all damage to the surrounding landscape and avoid unnecessary scars to rocks. In all, about 112 cubic yards of cement rubble masonry were built. Sections of the original serpentine sandstone retaining walls exist at present.

On August 1, 1968, a rock slide buried a 250-foot section of the trail under a pile of debris from three to twenty feet. Reconstruction work was started during September 1968, and a helicopter was flown in from the Grand Canyon to transport men and equipment onto the cliffs above the slide area. Rather than remove the small mountain created by the slide, the trail was reconstructed over the top. In the course of the project, which was completed in April 1970, rock retaining walls were constructed to stabilize the loose slide materials.

Bibliography

Edwards, Guy D. "Report on Engineering Activities, Zion N.P., 1928."

Edwards, Guy D. "Reports to Superintendent, Zion N.P., 1929."

Zion National Park. "Completion Reports", 1929, 1970.